A SIMPLE TECHNIQUE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF CP

by Gregory T. Shanos, 160 Budlong Ave., Warwick, RI

A familiar technique for the preservation of flowers can successfully be applied to carnivorous plants. This method utilizes the dessicant, (drying agent) silica gel. The specimen is simply covered with silica gel in a sealed container for 24 to 48 hours at room temperature. After the elapsed time period, the plant is removed, and any excess silica that may adhere to the specimen can be gently swept off with an artist's brush. The dessicant can be reused or "reactivated" by heating in an oven at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for one hour.

Silica gel can be purchased from any nursery or chemical supply company. This compound causes the dehydration of living tissue without distortion of the specimens' shape or form. There is also little variation in color. In fact, colors tend to darken upon dehydration. The dehydrated specimens are quite fragile having the consistency of tissue paper. Durability of the specimen is increased by using an acrylic matte sealer. Spraying is strongly recommended since dehydrated specimens are moisture sensitive.

Carnivorous plants that preserve best are pitcher plants, especially *Cephalotus, Darlingtonia, Nepenthes,* and *Sarracenia. Drosera* and *Pinguicula* can be preserved with varying amounts of success. *Dionaea* also preserves well with excellent retention of color.

I urge all carnivorous plant enthusiasts to experiment with this technique and comment on their results in future volumes of the *Carnivorous Plant Newsletter.*

How to Get Rid of That Algae in Your Utricularia Tank

by Robert Manzoni

Owners of aquatic *Utricularia* know what a problem algae is. In fact, the green, filamentous algae (or Blanket Weed as it is more commonly known) may grow even if you place it in a sunless position. I have *Utricularia australis* in a small tank in the southern part of the house receiving filtered sunless light. The algae made the water look murky and obscured the *Utricularia.* I decided to find a way to combat this problem so I consulted our society's library (one of the privileges of being a society librarian).

The best solution appeared to be making a chemical mixture of 0.2 grams of copper sulphate crystal in 540 ml of distilled water. However, I did not like the idea of adding various chemicals to the water so I kept researching. It was not until I talked to a few nurserymen that one of them suggested I use a water snail to combat the algae. He in fact owned an aquarium and the water snails kept it clean from algae. I decided to try it so I went to my nearest creek and got a water snail. I then put it in the tank and promptly forgot about it for a week.

A week later I walked past it and noticed that the tank was clear of algae! The water snail had eaten all the algae and the water was finally clear. The past few weeks I have been keeping a careful eye on it to see that it was not also eating the *Utricularia,* but to my knowledge, it hasn't.

If anybody else is thinking of using water snails, then maybe a handful would be sufficient for larger size containers.

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Figure 1.
Living *Dionaea muscipula* specimen.

Figure 2.
Silica gel dehydrated specimen

Figure 3.
Dehydrated and acrylic matte sealed specimen